Interactive Problem-Solving

Introduction

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Scholar-Practitioner: Informal Mediation by the
Interactive Problem-Solving

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The impact of exercise in the prevention of chronic diseases has been a topic of extensive research and discussion in recent years. Exercise, defined as any body movement produced by skeletal muscles that increases energy expenditure above resting levels, has been shown to provide numerous health benefits. These benefits include improvements in cardiovascular health, diabetes control, and cognitive function. A key aspect of this research is the investigation of the potential for exercise to prevent or delay the onset of chronic diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, and certain cancers.

Exercise, particularly aerobic exercise, has been shown to improve insulin sensitivity and decrease body fat, which are beneficial for individuals at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. In addition, regular physical activity has been associated with a reduced risk of developing cardiovascular disease by lowering blood pressure, improving lipid profile, and increasing HDL cholesterol levels. Moreover, exercise has been linked to a decreased risk of certain cancers, including colon, breast, and prostate cancer.

The mechanisms by which exercise prevents chronic diseases are complex and not fully understood. It is believed that exercise may achieve these benefits through its effects on inflammation, energy expenditure, and insulin sensitivity. Future research is needed to further elucidate these mechanisms and to identify specific types and intensities of exercise that are most effective for disease prevention.

In conclusion, the evidence supporting the role of exercise in preventing chronic diseases is strong. As a result, public health recommendations emphasize the importance of regular physical activity for maintaining overall health and reducing the risk of chronic diseases. Continued research in this area will be crucial in identifying the most effective strategies for promoting exercise and preventing chronic diseases.
predicated on the view that the range of influence processes employed in conflict relationships must be broadened. It is necessary to move beyond influence strategies based on threats and even to expand and refine strategies based on promises and positive incentives. By searching for solutions that satisfy the needs of both parties, workshops explore the possibility of mutual influence by way of responsiveness to each other's needs. A key element in this process, emphasized throughout this chapter, is mutual reassurance. In existential conflicts, in particular, parties can encourage each other to move to the negotiating table by reducing both sides' fear—just as more traditional strategic analysts maintain, by increasing their gain. At the macro-level, the present approach calls for a shift in emphasis in international influence processes from deterrence and compliance to mutual reassurance. The use of this mode of influence has the added advantage of not only affecting specific behaviors by the other party, but contributing to a transformation of the relationship between the parties.

The expanded conception of influence processes that can be brought to bear in a conflict relationship is based on a view of international conflict as a dynamic phenomenon, emphasizing the uncertainty and possibility of change. Conflict resolution efforts are gauged, therefore, to discovering possibilities for change, identifying conditions for change, and overcoming resistance to change. Such an approach forces "best-case" analyses and an attitude of "strategic optimism" (Kelman, 1978, 1979), not because of an unrealistic denial of malignant trends, but as part of a deliberate strategy to promote change by actively searching for and accentuating whatever realistic possibilities for peaceful resolution of the conflict might be on the horizon. Optimism, in this sense, is part of a strategy designed to create self-fulfilling prophecies of a positive nature, balancing the self-fulfilling prophecies of escalation created by the pessimistic expectations and the worst-case scenarios often favored by more traditional analysts. Problem-solving workshops can be particularly useful in exploring ways in which change can be promoted through the parties' own actions and in discovering ways in which each can exert influence on the other (Kelman, 1991a, 1997b).

Conclusion: relevance of interactive problem-solving

The principles of interactive problem-solving have some applicability in a wide range of international conflict situations. Indeed, I would argue that problem-solving workshops and related activities—along with other forms of unofficial diplomacy—should be thought of as integral parts of a larger diplomatic process. This type of intervention can make certain unique contributions to the larger process that are not available through official channels—for example, by providing opportunities for non-committal exploration of possible ways of getting to the table and of shaping mutually acceptable solutions. Moreover, the assumptions and principles of interactive problem-solving can contribute to a re-conceptualization of international relationships at the macro-level by encouraging shifts in the nature of the discourse and the means of influence that characterize international relations today (Kelman, 1996a). Nevertheless, it must be said that problem-solving workshops, particularly in the format that has evolved in our style of practice, are more directly relevant in some types of conflict than in others and at certain phases of a given conflict than at others.

Since my primary case has been the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is not surprising that my approach is most relevant to situations that share some of the characteristics of that conflict. The approach is most directly relevant to long-standing conflicts, in which the interests of the parties have gradually converged, and large segments of each community perceive this to be the case, but nevertheless they seem to be unable or unwilling to enter into negotiations or to bring the negotiations to a satisfactory conclusion. The psychological obstacles to negotiation in these cases are not readily overcome despite the changes in realities and in perceived interests.

Interactive problem-solving is not feasible if there is no interest among the parties—or significant elements within each party—in changing the status quo. It is not necessary if there are no profound barriers to negotiations; in that event, other forms of mediation—designed to enhance negotiating skills or to propose reasonable options—may be equally or more useful. However, when the recognition of common interests is insufficient to overcome the psychological barriers, interactive problem-solving becomes particularly germane. These conditions are likely to prevail in internecine, prototypical identity conflicts at the international or intercommunal level, particularly conflicts in which the parties see their national existence to be at stake. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Cyprus conflict, and the conflicts in Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka, clearly share these characteristics. There are many other conflicts, however, that can benefit from a process designed to promote mutual reassurance and to help develop a new relationship between conflicting parties that must find a way of living together.

Since the goal of workshops is to help the parties translate their interest in changing the status quo into an effective negotiating process, by overcoming the barriers that stand in the way of such a process, it is necessary to select workshop participants from those segments of the two communities that are indeed interested in a negotiated agreement. They may be skeptical about the possibility of achieving such an agreement and suspicious about the intentions of the other side, but they must have some interest in finding a mutually acceptable way of ending the conflict. In addition, workshop participants must be prepared to meet and talk with members of the other community at a level of equality within the workshop setting, whatever asymmetries in power between the parties may